A

SERMON

ON A

FUTURE STATE,

COMBATING THE OPINION

THAT

"DEATH IS ETERNAL SLEEP."

PREACHED AT THE

MAGDALEN ASYLUM, LEESON-STREET,

DUBLIN.

By GILBERT AUSTIN, A. M.

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TO THE

MOST REVEREND FATHER IN GOD,

ROBERT FOWLER, D. D.

LORD ARCHBIPHOP OF DUBLIN,

AND

PRIMATE OF IRELAND.

My Lord,

At a period, when infidelity has diſplayed a degree of audacity, hitherto unknown in the annals of the Chriſtian world; when not only individuals proclaim and publiſh opinions, the moſt contradictory to our holy Religion; but when a great nation has ſubmitted to be mocked and beguiled of the Chriſtian's hope, by *falſe Philoſophy*——It is the duty of every Man who values the promiſes of Eternal Life, to combat the pernicious ſophiſtry which would invade his hopes: But it is the peculiar duty of the Miniſters of the Goſpel, to excite the attention of Men to every argument, which ſupports the great cauſe of Truth

and Salvation. Under this impreſſion, I have been anxious to engage the public mind, to inveſtigate and purſue to their juſt concluſion, the arguments contained in the following diſcourſe; together with ſuch other topics on the high ſubject of a future life, as their own learning and judgment may ſupply.

To your Grace I am emboldened to preſent this diſcourſe for protection; convinced of your zeal for the intereſts of Religion, and knowing the favourable indulgence with which you have conſtantly received from your Clergy every effort, however humble, in its ſervice. The greateſt perſonal reſpect, and the impreſſion of your uniform and kind attention for a number of years, in addition to higher motives, induce me to embrace this occaſion, to acknowledge with how much gratitude I have the honour to be,

Your Grace's

Moſt faithful

and obliged Servant,

Baggot-ſtreet,
20*th March*, 1794. GILBERT AUSTIN.

A

SERMON

ON A

FUTURE STATE.

II. Tim. i. part 10 verſe.

— Who hath brought life and immortality to light.

IF there be any ſubject within the reach of the human faculties worthy of ſerious inveſtigation above all others, that ſubject muſt be an enquiry concerning a future Life. To the magnitude of this enquiry nothing which concerns the intereſts of the preſent Life, however preſſing, can bear any proportion. It may ſeem to a ſuperficial view, that our firſt and chief concern is with the exiſtence we actually poſſeſs, and not with one of which we have had no experience, and which if even certain, may be remote. It may ſeem (nay let us not affect to diſſemble the truth) it *does* ſeem to the majority of men, and the opinion daily ſpreads wider, that our principal concern is with the comforts and

enjoyments of the Life we actually poſſeſs, and that we ſhould comparatively trouble ourſelves little about another. And in this opinion we ſhould be perhaps ſufficiently correct, were it not that one material circumſtance is overlooked, were it not that it is built on one dangerous error.—Men do not take the trouble to obſerve that this Life is intimately connected with another, they fallaciouſly ſuppoſe this Life to be a ſtate of independent exiſtence. If then they either are or can be miſtaken in ſuch a ſuppoſition—the conſideration of a future exiſtence and its connection with the preſent, becomes an object of ſuch mighty conſequence, that the value of even Life itſelf ſinks in the compariſon.—For when a future and endleſs exiſtence is ſuppoſed in any reſpect to be influenced by the buſineſs we are now engaged in, it were madneſs to leave out of the account ſo important a conſideration.—Thus the exiſtence of futurity, if certain or even probable, however yet unexperienced, however diſtant, is of more value than the preſent in proportion to its extent—that is becauſe futurity is an endleſs ſtate, and becauſe this life is ſhort and tranſitory in proportion as the vaſt ocean is to a drop of water, or as Eternity is to a fleeting moment.—Our future Life not only relates to the longer period of exiſtence, but it embraces this and every moment of our exiſtence; it not only affects the concerns of this Life, but abſolutely changes their ſcope and their value.

But

But if there is no future Life whoſe rewards or puniſhments at all depend upon this—then let us follow uncontrouled the ſuggeſtions of all our inclinations, *let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.*—If there is no hereafter let our paſſions have free indulgence now, throw the reins looſe upon the neck of neighing ſenſuality, ſatiate avarice with Mammon, and vengeance with blood—Only guard againſt the feeble ſword of the Law, only be careful to evade blind and hood-winked Juſtice. If there is no hereafter, and if as the voice of foreign philoſophy proclaims *death is eternal ſleep*, away with Religion and the vain miniſters of Religion—and let the blood of his prieſts be the laſt ſacrifice to their God.—For what is Religion? is it not to pray for God's bleſſing, to deprecate evils, to implore his forgiveneſs for our tranſgreſſions, to ſubmit ourſelves to his good providence, to hope in his mercy.—But, wherefore all this interruption to the ſerious buſineſs and pleaſures of Life, if we are to die eternally?—The righteous do not here alone obtain God's bleſſings, or eſcape his puniſhments;—his forgiveneſs would then be nugatory if he puniſh not hereafter.—The world and all the enjoyments of the world are poſſeſſed by thoſe who ſerve him not.—Behold the blaſphemous who inſults inſtead of venerating his name; behold the impious who flies in his face with preſumptuous ſin; behold the adulterer, the oppreſſor, the enemy, and the avenger, *Yet his ſun ſhines*

upon them, and his rain falls alike upon the juſt and the unjuſt.—Innocuous thunders roll over the head of guilt and ſtrike the innocent; and impotent ſtorms laſh the compact and firm timbers of the veſſel in which he rides to the Indies in queſt of gold and crimes; or haſtens to traffic in human miſery, depoſiting the curſed Mammon on peaceful ſhores, and plundering them of life and dearer liberty, whilſt his triumphant ſails are ſwelled with the ſighs of his fellow men. O! ſince the juſtice of Heaven viſiteth not for theſe things, what ſhall we ſay of the innocent and the oppreſſed, whether ſwarthy Savages or wretched Chriſtians, are they not of all men the moſt miſerable?—And if hereafter no compenſation ſhall be made for their ſufferings, were it not better to baniſh all name of Virtue from the world?—Were it not better the meek and the oppreſſed, the poor and the afflicted (the great majority of men) ſhould riſe againſt their tyrants, become the oppreſſors in their turn, and transform this fair world into a den of tygers.—Look abroad, is not this horrid ſtate begun—are not Virtue as well as Religion baniſhed from a once happy country? are not his comfort and his hopes of hereafter plucked from the breaſt of meek and ſuffering penury? and is he not become a furious and ſavage beaſt of prey?—Are not the bonds of ſociety torn aſunder, and its principles rooted up, whilſt a viſionary equality has erected a new and unheard of ſociety upon murder and upon crimes?

crimes?—Are not theſe and a thouſand horrors not to be enumerated, the direct and neceſſary conſequences of raſh irreligion, and of blind and ſavage Atheiſm? which has ordained that pollution and extravagance ſhall uſurp the temples, and be ſeated on the altars of the living God.

I HAVE not turned from my ſubject to call your attention, to theſe ſad diſtractions which have more or leſs involved all Europe, and by which we too muſt ſuffer.—But theſe ſad diſtractions are near the heart of every thinking man, and cannot fail to excite our enquiries to inveſtigate the probable cauſes of ſuch exceſſes. Political enquiries, the little and mean worldly intereſts of men, are not indeed ſubjects in general ſuited to the dignity of this place. We condeſcend therefore, to touch only on thoſe which involve ſomething higher than the temporal affairs of princes.—And we will not heſitate to pronounce, whatever other cauſes may be aſſigned for the preſent and paſt enormities committed in a neighbouring country, that they are almoſt principally owing to irreligion—that they are the neceſſary conſequences of blind Atheiſm, and of the denial of a future ſtate. As ſuch, they have ſuggeſted our preſent ſubject; and as conſequences ſo momentous and terrible, may attend ſuch opinions even in this Life, nay even in this Kingdom; amongſt weightier reaſons it will be admitted as one ſufficient to

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ſtimulate us to a ſerious conſideration of our future exiſtence.

When we turn our attention to this great ſubject, we perceive at once, that it is capable of a two-fold conſideration.—We ſee that the evidences for our future exiſtence, are to be derived either from the deductions of our *Reaſon*, or from the light of *Revelation*. We quickly perceive alſo, that on this high ſubject our reaſon cannot eſtabliſh any concluſions ſo certain, as to preclude the neceſſity of appealing to information of higher authority.—We know, that this high ſubject has in all ages of the world, and in every nation, exerciſed the brighteſt talents of the wiſeſt among the ſons of men; and that the event, however favourable to our better hopes, has not been ſo deciſive as to force conviction upon all mankind. We know, that the belief of a future ſtate has formed the ground-work, and baſis of every Religion on the face of the earth; inaſmuch as we have already hinted, without this belief Religion cannot exiſt. We know, that the beſt and the wiſeſt of men, the philoſophers, and lawgivers of the world, have been themſelves perſuaded of the truth of a future ſtate, and both by their writings and inſtitutions, have endeavoured to fix the important belief in the hearts of the reſt of men.—And they would have ſucceeded univerſally in their excellent endeavours: the belief of a future ſtate in ſpight of the ignorance

and

and inattention of the majority, had been impreſſed with the moſt unſhaken conviction on all; had not the pride of other men, alſo calling themſelves philoſophers and wiſe, contended for the contrary opinion, *they have ſaid, and they now* ſay, that *death is eternal ſleep*, and they have found, and will always find enough to accept their ſad and degrading opinions.—They will find them among the groſs and ignorant, among men who will not or cannot reaſon, and among the corrupt and profligate; who feeling themſelves obnoxious to puniſhment in another ſtate, through fear of worſe, would willingly embrace the deſperate and comfortleſs hope of annihilation; and be contented to ſleep a cold and eternal ſleep in the grave. The vices, the paſſions, and the fears of men, being placed in the ſcale againſt the concluſions of reaſon, as to our future Life, are thus often able to outweigh in the ſenſual mind. The authority of corrupted human reaſon is oppoſed to the authority of the ſoundeſt human reaſon, and the ſincere and feeble are perverted, or unable to decide, are ſuſpended in cruel doubt. Hence is ſeen the neceſſity of recurring to higher authority, if ſuch can be had, to determine the hopes of men in this great queſtion; that authority we have in the ſure Revelation of God's written word in the Holy Goſpel of our Salvation. On this we reſt our comfort and hopes, and the aſſurance of our calling—to this bleſſed Revelation we turn for the light of life and immortality, when vain philoſophy, and

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dark ſophiſtry would beguile us of the glory of our nature, and plunge our immortal ſoul into the darkneſs of eternal death!

But, though reaſon by prejudices and paſſions may be led into error, yet is it capable of conducting us alſo far in the road of truth, when uſed with candour, and with humility. We do not reject the light of the glimmering lamp to aid us, to perform our neceſſary buſineſs in the abſence of the glorious luminary of the day.—The rational life of the Chriſtian is like his natural life, divided by day and night alternately; now he walks abroad under the day-ſpring from an high, and contemplates the magnificence of God's works, by the ſure light of Revelation—and now he ſtudies his laws, and labours to finiſh his taſk in the late evening, by the feebler lamp of reaſon.

We will not then reject the aid of reaſon on the ſubject of our future exiſtence, but proceed to lay before you, *firſt*, the conſideration of ſome truths ariſing from our nature and knowledge of ourſelves—and, *ſecondly*, preſent to your recollection ſome of the grand truths of Revelation.

In this order (ſince no man can pretend to refuſe to engage in an enquiry of mere reaſon) we may poſſibly awaken the attention of infidelity itſelf, ſhould any taint thereof have crept in among us; and we ſhall feel the ſtrength of God

God confirming our weakneſs. We ſally forth ſoldiers militant under Chriſt, with confidence to combat under cover of the powerful artillery of Revelation. At all events our courage may ſerve to confirm our own faith, ſhould we even fail to make any juſt impreſſion on infidelity.—The forces of infidelity are indeed numerous and obſtinate.—Intemperate folly and youthful ignorance lead the van, ſtimulated to combat the hopes of future life by heated paſſions, which hear not reaſon; habitual and impenitent ſin follows, with ears cloſed up which dares not to hope—inſolent vanity, and falſe philoſophy, blow the trumpet and ſtir up oppoſition to the laſt; yet we give them battle on the ground of reaſon, having eſtabliſhed this one poſition——*That there is a God.*——This truth we at preſent aſſume as known and believed by all.—If any be ignorant of this fundamental truth, or affect to doubt it, we inform him that our arguments are ſubſequent to this belief, that they depend upon it, and are not to be waſted on him who has not learned the firſt rudiments of knowledge, and the ſublimeſt truth which reaſon teaches; we diſmiſs the dull Atheiſt from our congregation, for he cannot feel the deductions of reaſon, who is blind to that ſplendid evidence which proclaims God in all his works.—*There is* then *a God.*—An eternal and omnipotent Being inveſted eſſentially and infinitely with every attribute of ſupreme excellence.—A Being of infinite power, of infinite wiſdom,

wiſdom, and of infinite goodneſs, before all, above all, the author and preſerver of all, *in whom we live and move, and have our being*, whoſe providence ſuſtains and governs the univerſe.

THE government of God throughout all nature is ſeen to be wiſe and uniform—no vain or capricious laws diſturb its harmony and juſtice; the more profoundly they are ſtudied, the more evidently do the wiſdom and goodneſs of the Lord appear in all his works—in all the works of his inferior Creation; for in his higher Creation, in his rational Creation, ſtrange irregularity prevails.—Man, the nobleſt work of God's viſible Creation, man, poſſeſſed of the moſt elevated endowments, is alone wicked and abſurd; man alone, of all God's creatures, is diſcontented and unhappy in his ſituation; man alone appears to be miſplaced on this earth; man, who is found either with inverted appetite, grovelling among the brutes, or with exalted ambition aſpiring to divinity; man alone violates the laws of his Maker, and ſins againſt his God; he alone ſorrows for his crimes, and groans in repentance.—Man, ſtrange and unaccountable man, is the Lord of this earth, which is ſubject alike to his caprices and to his crimes, as to his power and to his wiſdom; man is a mixture of various evil, and various good, the ſlave and the tyrant, the oppreſſor and the oppreſſed, fierce and gentle, benevolent and cruel.

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—His enjoyments are uncertain, his evils inevitable; the innocent ſuffer, and the wicked proſper.—Alas! what an abſolute contradiction is man, what vanity of vanities is human life?

THERE are two ſolutions of this involved and profound Enigma. *Firſt*, That God (if there exiſt any ſuch Being) has abandoned men to the evil imaginations of their own hearts, and that he taketh no note of human actions. *Secondly*, It is believed, that the Creator of heaven and earth, our Lord God, has placed us here in a ſtate only of probation, and preparatory to a better life.

WE are to chuſe the moſt rational of theſe ſolutions,—The firſt is loaded with abſurdity, and contradicts every principle we can diſcover concerning the Author of the reſt of the Creation, who muſt be alſo our Creator.—Over all his other and inferior works, he appears to exerciſe the moſt providential care and wiſdom.—Towards men, the higheſt of all, he muſt appear abſurd and cruel, if he can be ſuppoſed to have left them to a blind chance, and to be careleſs of their conduct.—But if we believe the ſecond, that God has placed us here only previous to a final change to another life, and that here by our own application of the powers he has given us, we are to earn for ourſelves rewards or puniſhment hereafter: His moral government wears another appearance, and inſtead of being chargeable with every defect and abſurdity, the evils

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of the world reſolve themſelves into the freedom and imperfections of the beings who inhabit it, and God's government of man is an admirable, a juſt, and a connected ſyſtem worthy his eternal wiſdom and goodneſs, and ſuitable to the high rank we hold in his Creation.

In this view of God's moral government, we truſt the concluſion of ſound reaſon will be, that this life is only probationary, and that another will be the ſtate of retribution, wherein ſhall be fully vindicated all the ways of God to Man.

The ſecond argument I ſhall lay before you, for our future exiſtence, ſhall be drawn from the comparative imperfection of our intellectual ſtate here, and from its ſtrong tendency to completion in another life, wherein God ſhall perfect that noble work, which he has only begun here but breaks off unfiniſhed.

In his mere animal nature, Man like every other viſible work of God's creation appears to be of a finiſhed perfection: his form, his powers, his ſtructure, his habits, his inſtincts, are all adapted to his manner of life. Of this admirable œconomy, the phyſiologiſt and the anatomiſt daily diſcover convincing proofs.—And of the ſame admirable œconomy they alſo diſcover equal proofs in the examination of the brute

brute Creation, and even of the minuteſt inſect; all are furniſhed with the moſt appropriate powers, and formed on a conſtruction the moſt perfectly ſuited to their various neceſſities and inſtincts. And not animals alone, but the very plants of all the vegetable Creation furniſh proofs of the ſame wiſdom and perfection in their ſtructure, from *the cedar tree that is in Lebanon, even unto the hyſſop that ſpringeth out of the wall.*—And from Man, conſidered in his mere animal nature, downwards even to the meaneſt vegetable, all the Creation are ſubject to one uniform law, and make their regular progreſs through the ſtages of production, youth, maturity, and age, towards *death.* Now if we can diſcover in our own ſpecies nothing to diſtinguiſh them, nothing peculiarly elevating them above the common nature of animals, we muſt acknowledge that neither can *we* be exempt from the common and univerſal law, *the ſleep of eternal death.*—But that diſtinction and that exemption we feel, and claim in the divine eſſence of our intellectual ſoul.

It is not in ſtrength that Man excels the lion, it is not in ſwiftneſs that he excels the deer, it is not that his flight is more rapid and exalted than the eagles, nor is it that in the depths of the profound ocean, he can contend with the Leviathan, it is not in theſe animal powers that he excels the moſt powerful of God's Creation, but in his intellectual faculties

culties he is ſuperior to all. It is in this O God, that *Thou madeſt him little lower than the angels, thou crownedſt him with glory and honour, and didſt ſet him over the works of thy hands; in this thou haſt put all things in ſubjection under his feet.* Yet this divine part of our nature which elevates man above all God's viſible Creation, is left in a ſtate of imperfection, with which his inferior works are none of them diſgraced.—Reaſon in this life never obtains its full and perfect exerciſe: no man ever here enjoys the portion of knowledge of which his faculties are capable; the moſt cultivated and the moſt ſoaring mind, is the moſt cruelly diſappointed; the divine faculty of reaſon when it has attained its higheſt meridian, and the underſtanding when it is opened to the cleareſt perception of the ſublimeſt truths, by the ſlow ſteps of indefatigable labour, are compelled to ſtop their progreſs, and to yield up to diſappointment.

The faculties of the mind expand in the gradual advancement through the various ſtages, from infancy to childhood, and from childhood to youth, and diſcover at every ſtep the progreſſive unfoldings of the reaſonable ſoul; till manhood at length (if it be permitted to reach that period) diſplays and enjoys the free exerciſe of the divine faculty of reaſon. He obſerves the amazing field which lies open to his excurſions, he exults in its extent and riches, (too often he magni-

magnifies it in his vanity) he calls forth all his faculties to aid his reſearches, he examines, he weighs, he compares, and judges on every ſide; —his powers are invigorated and encreaſed by application—he deſires more knowledge, the more he acquires—he wiſhes to know all that men know, and all that men can know.—But this ſcale of knowledge is too vaſt for him, he muſt be contented to be ignorant of what is known to thouſands, and what will hereafter be known to thouſands; he has only the choice of a little limited ſphere for his own exertions, and even in that little ſphere of his choice he is not permitted to proſecute his enquiries, ſo as to ſatisfy the glorious thirſt of his ſoul.—He is withered like a flower—the rude hand of death cuts him off untimely from his noble and worthy purſuits; his eager curioſity ſharpened, but not gratified—mines of knowledge explored but not enjoyed—and hurries him down to darkneſs, oblivion and the grave!—Can it be to oblivion and darkneſs, though it is to the grave? —Can a being of ſuch perfect goodneſs as we conceive God to be, delight to mock and interrupt for *ever* our nobleſt and worthieſt purſuits?—Can he wantonly break off by the relentleſs hand of *eternal death*, the fruit of reaſon juſt as it begins to knit?—Can God delight to ſtop the advancement of the intellectual ſoul, his moſt wonderful work, and arreſt for ever its progreſs towards the perfection with which he hath gifted all the inferior creatures of his hands?

hands?—It is not to be conceived, it is not poſſible.—Death muſt lead the ſoul to God, to perfect knowledge, to ſcience without doubt, without end: And it ſhall be the glory of reaſonable beings to go on in eternal progreſs, from perfection to perfection, ever approaching, but never to arrive at the inacceſſible and infinite perfections of God!

The evils of man's moral ſituation in this world, and the interruption of his intellectual life, before it can arrive at the perfection of which it is capable, we have advanced as proofs that man muſt live hereafter: theſe arguments which ſo ſtrongly evince this truth with reſpect to Man, do not apply with reſpect to inferior animals, but ſerve to diſtinguiſh our nature altogether from theirs; and it is neceſſary to mark the diſtinction, ſince they, who ſay we ſleep the ſleep of eternal death, would reduce us to mere animals. We proceed therefore to diſcriminate between man and brutes.

In the moral government of the world, we cannot conceive that brutes can have any concern, as we cannot conceive that they have any the moſt remote idea of ſuch government;—And their lives ſo far from imperfection appear a ſtate of perfect, however ſhort exiſtence; becauſe we cannot ſuppoſe them guilty of any crimes, or objects of any rewards, perhaps at all, or if they are ſo in any meaſure, it cannot be ſuppoſed that

that another life can be at all neceſſary to render them juſtice.—And alſo, becauſe every deſire of mere animals appears capable of being fulfilled, and every power and faculty capable of being perfected to its utmoſt extent in this life.

The exiſtence of the mere animal is perfected and accompliſhed by mere animal culture, by climate, and by food; each animal is perfect in himſelf, and independent even of his own ſpecies, except that the accidental circumſtances of food, or climate, or domeſtication, and the art of man may operate ſome trivial change.—The powers and diſpoſition of the horſe, are like thoſe of another horſe; of the bird, to the bird of the ſame ſpecies; and of inſect to the inſect.—Animal man is to animal man alſo nearly equal; whether he inhabit the regions of enlightened Europe, devoted to the gratification of his mere animal appetites; or whether he dwell in barbarous regions an ignorant barbarian. It is in the cultivation of their intellectual powers alone, that men excel men beyond all bounds or meaſure.—The ſimple inhabitants of the ſouthern climates, who are dropped in the iſlands encompaſſed by the vaſt Pacific Ocean, far from the beams of cultivated ſcience, dread and revere almoſt as Gods the power and wiſdom of their fellow-men, who explore their ſequeſtered habitations, carrying to their ſhores death and wonders in their floating worlds.—But we fear not their ſimplicity; we are not alarmed leſt their ignorance

ſhould be wafted to our coaſts.—Our knowledge, and therefore power, would ſmile at the invaſion, were it poſſible, of a handful of naked barbarians.

THE acquiſitions of men are another boundary of ſtrong diſcrimination, between them and inferior animals.

THE acquiſitions of the mere animal are confined to the individual, and periſh along with him. The acquiſitions of the intellectual faculties, are for the whole ſpecies, are extended to them, and are accumulated without end for them to the lateſt poſterity. Thus amongſt animals, the ſteed ſhall be trained to all the evolutions of warlike tactics, and to all the accompliſhed delicacy of the bridle; and the dog ſhall be taught by man ſomething approaching to human ſagacity: But theſe acquirements are not communicable beyond the individual animal: The animal cannot teach them to his own ſpecies, they die along with him:—And other ſteeds, and other dogs, are to be trained and taught by the ſkill and ingenuity of man, for his own uſe and ſervice. After all the continued exertions of the art of man, towards the improvement of the domeſtic animals appropriated to his uſe; they are nothing advanced; they learn nothing by communication from each other; but the horſe and the dog, untaught by man, are the ſame now as they were before the flood—nor have the moſt induſtrious, or ingenious animals improved in their own arts within the

the long lapſe of time. The beaver ſtill conſtructs his curious apartments, and the bee moulds ſtill her waxen cells with the ſame unaltered perfection, as when firſt they began in remote generations.

But man begins in rudeneſs, and advances towards perfection. Man alone improves. Man alone acquires knowledge and communicates it to his fellow: his knowledge thus communicated grows more abundant and ſpreads through the whole ſpecies, encreaſing as well as enlarging in every ſtep of its progreſs from the firſt inventor. The Philoſopher who has diſcovered and taught the ſublimeſt truths of ſcience, is himſelf excelled by his diſciples who imbibe all his knowledge, and add new knowledge of their own; and they, in their turn, are ſurpaſſed by their diſciples, and every generation becomes wiſer than the former; obtaining, as the ſucceſſor of the great Prophet of Iſrael, a double portion of their maſter's ſpirit. Their knowledge and their wiſdom die not with themſelves, however ſuddenly and rudely interrupted by death; but are handed over to poſterity an eternal inheritance, an ever-accumulating treaſure, to which imagination can ſet no bounds. For although the portion of knowledge which can poſſibly be acquired by the individual man is miſerably limited and finite, yet the whole ſtock of knowledge poſſeſſed by mankind at large, ſeems almoſt infinite;—of this knowledge

at leaſt it is evidently poſſible for any individual to become poſſeſſed, and therefore for every individual, were they permitted to ſpend in health and vigour of application, a ſufficient length of exiſtence.—And every portion of this poſſible knowledge which we are deprived of by the interruption of death, is a violation of our juſt expectations and enjoyments, unleſs it ſhall pleaſe God moſt mercifully to continue our exiſtence after death, that we may follow ſtill thoſe purſuits which are the glory and perfection of our nature.——Nay, let us reflect in our preſent life, how vaſt a majority of men are, from their ſituation and circumſtances, ſhut out from all the paths of knowledge; and obliged to leave neglected and uncultivated their divine mind. Let us reflect upon the injuſtice of their ſecluſion (as far as it is not their own fault) from the ſublimeſt pleaſures peculiar to their nature; and conſider how aſſuredly they may expect from the goodneſs of their Creator ample opportunity to evolve and enjoy their faculties to the utmoſt.—Look upon the labouring poor, bound down by the neceſſities of the body, almoſt to mere animal life: whilſt all the wonders of God's creation, recorded in the inexhauſtible pages of the book of knowledge, are diſplayed and taught to the rich and the happy.—Look upon whole nations, where darkneſs and ſuperſtition reign in profound night; uncheered by the dawn of Science, not to ſpeak of the light of Revelation.—Look upon the naked Indian,

Indian, and place his uninformed mind in the ſcale againſt thoſe of the Lockes and the Newtons, the glory and the wonder of enlightened Europe. Can we forbear to exclaim againſt this cruel partiality in human affairs? which has left thoſe in the profoundeſt darkneſs of ignorance, whilſt theſe favoured ſons of heaven, have the one been permitted to dive into the deepeſt ſprings which move the ſoul of man, whilſt the other, with vaſt and amazing flight, has ſprung beyond the boundaries of the world, has launched into the regions of ſpace immenſe: and, as if admitted into the eternal councils, has calculated the laws by which Almighty wiſdom regulates the ſtupendous machine, which moves in celeſtial harmony the univerſal worlds. Calculated—yes, and with ſuch truth, that the place and ſituations of thoſe worlds and ſyſtems to which the naked eye cannot reach, are foretold with exact and unerring preciſion for ages yet to come.—— This is glorious knowledge, by which man, even now in this mortal life, can ſpring by his active and enlightened mind beyond the little ſphere which confines him, taſting beforehand the commerce of celeſtial ſpirits, and admitted to behold the uniform wiſdom and harmony of the laws of his God!

And ſhall the great majority of mankind be eternally precluded from taſting this ſublime knowledge? And ſhall the noble and aſpiring

ing minds, which for the good of men have traced out the pure fountains of knowledge, taſte themſelves thereof no more?—Shall they which have unveiled the light of heavenly ſcience, look themſelves upon it no more, but remain faſt confined in the darkneſs of the grave, and in eternal death?—Nay, ſhall we not rather conclude, that death hath already placed them nearer to the fountain of all light; that they are at this moment in the preſence of their God, adding to the full meaſure of intellectual enjoyment, and running the race of intellectual perfection?

Among the various and powerful natural arguments which remain to prove that we ſhall live hereafter, the following muſt be enumerated:—the Conſciouſneſs which ariſes in the breaſt upon the commiſſion of ſin, and that Reſponſibility which we feel to the Author of our Being;—which always are found to ſhake the guilty mind with fears, leſs frequent indeed in the hardened ſinner, but never to be entirely baniſhed from the thoughts. Theſe are the warnings of God in the heart, and beſpeak in language not to be miſtaken, the certainty of a judgment to come. Happy are they who hear them, and believe with repentance to life. We could paint the horrors and the forebodings which agitate the ſinful mind, and preſs upon them the juſt apprehenſions of God's judgments; but we are not obliged to be diffuſe

fuſe upon theſe ſtrong arguments, for they enforce often their own conviction, and we truſt we have not occaſion to urge them to any in this congregation. And as we have already treſpaſſed far on your patience, neceſſitated by our duty and the vaſt importance of the ſubject, particularly at this moment, we will entreat your kind attention only to one argument more, of a happier aſpect, and, we truſt, of a no leſs convincing nature.

THIS argument we derive from our power of looking forward to futurity, and from our deſire and hopes of life.

That the inferior animals are little capable of looking forward into futurity, I imagine will readily be admitted. For the inſtinctive proviſion which ſome animals make for food or reſt, or for the nurture of their young, we cannot properly name ſuch an exertion of forethought. Or if it muſt be called an exertion of ſuch a power, it is one limited to their abſolute wants; and as far as it is evidently neceſſary, and effectually accompliſhed, it makes entirely for the argument we would preſs upon your attention. For we contend that the very power of looking forward in any reſpect into futurity, is a preſumption that we require that degree of power for our neceſſities.—For the wiſe Author of all Nature is not found to laviſh his powers in vain upon his creatures. To ſome animals he has granted ſtrength, to ſome ſwiftneſs, to ſome patient endurance

durance of hunger: to all, inſtinct to provide for their moſt immediate wants; but on none inferior to man has he beſtowed the powers of calculation, the reaſonings of knowledge, or the diſcovery of arts, becauſe ſuch gifts to the lower animals were a waſte of his bounty, which they could neither uſe nor communicate—which would ſerve only to torture and diſtract them with vain ſpeculations. Shall we ſay then that God has been more unjuſt to man than to the brutes, and that he has furniſhed us not only with powers to conceive a future exiſtence, but alarmed us with fears concerning it, and elevated us with hopes; and all this but to diſturb or diſappoint us?

Nay more, is not this alſo an evident truth? —That the whole energy of man's exertions is directed towards the future almoſt alone, even in every period of this his fleeting life? —The paſt is not thought on, except to draw from it inſtructions for the future; and the very preſent, the ever-valued preſent is ſacrificed to its intereſts—By whom? by the wiſe, by the prudent;—nay, by even the worldly and the fool. Avarice and worldly wiſdom toil and labour in the preſent, and deny themſelves every enjoyment now, in order to ſecure good things for the future. The very fool in the extravagance of to-day, is preparing for the debauchery of to-morrow. The indolent and the worthleſs will cheerfully undertake

dertake the buſineſs and the fatigue, that promiſe to bring them ſome ſenſual pleaſure at the concluſion. Even *they* are creatures living for the future, and even they violate the nature of man no farther, than that they abridge to as narrow a ſpace as poſſible their proſpects of the future. To-morrow, or after this fleeting hour if poſſible—is the ſhort excurſion of the proſpects of him who is called a fool. Next year, or when a few ſummers ſhall have brought my labours to bear—or when I grow old—before I die—or when my ſon or my grandſon becomes a man—ſays the wiſe man of this world—Let me live ſo that I ſhall not fear to die, and then let me live for ever in thy preſence, O God! is the prayer and the hope of him who would vindicate the dignity of his exalted nature!

Man is a creature whoſe chief exiſtence is yet in futurity: And *that* man will diſcharge his preſent duties beſt, who ſo regulates his actions, that their good effects ſhall extend to the greateſt future diſtance. Man is ſaid to be a diſcontented being; but let us rather excuſe ourſelves, becauſe it is our nature to look forward ever from the preſent, to ſomething better in the future;—Nor can we, nor ſhall we reſt, until we reach that final deſtination which our Soul ever pants after. And even in that ſtate, in the very enjoyment of conſcious goodneſs, and ineffable happineſs, the proſpect of future

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and never-ending enjoyment, muſt give the happineſs of Heaven its higheſt character, and its moſt exquiſite reliſh.——The joys of Heaven itſelf would be imperfect and mixed with ſorrow, could we ſuppoſe that they ſhould have an end.—New proſpects ever ariſing, new knowledge ever pouring in upon the gladdened Soul, new and ever-various contemplations of the wiſdom and goodneſs of God, and of the glories of his creation, muſt be ſupplied, and we may be aſſured will be ſupplied to a boundleſs eternity, to ſatisfy the infinite wiſhes of the immortal Soul:—of the Soul, which has indeed its birth in this morning of life, but whoſe hopes and deſires, and excurſive faculties, are the natural aſſurances that it ſhall never die.

The benign and Almighty Author of our being, is too wiſe and too frugal to laviſh in vain the moſt wonderful of his gifts—thoſe powers by which the underſtanding of man is capable of looking towards eternal life, and of comprehending, we may almoſt ſay *infinity*, in his little breaſt. But if his abundant and inexhauſtible power might be laviſh, his tender goodneſs would forbear to beſtow thoſe hopes and anxious wiſhes for life, which if not intended to be gratified, are only an inſult and a cruel mockery on the feelings of us his humble and dependant creatures. That we indulge theſe hopes what need is there to prove

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by argument?—Let every man conſult his own breaſt, let him examine the words and actions of other men.—See how all men cling to life, and hate to die.—See how the moſt illiterate and untaught ſavages, enjoy the fabulous images of their ideas of future life. The impreſſion is univerſal, the ſweet hope is univerſal throughout the whole family of mankind, from pole to pole. And if any exceptions are to be met, the rejection of theſe hopes (and ſure they are too congenial to our nature to be rejected, when once fairly preſented to the view,) ſtamps a man a monſter in the rational world, as prodigious as if in form he were a man with the head of an unreaſoning brute. And ſince we muſt conclude theſe hopes univerſal, (for we cannot believe a whole enlightened nation has been deluded out of them by the frenzy of a few atrocious madmen,) ſince I ſay, we muſt conclude theſe hopes to be univerſally impreſſed on men—we contend that they are as ſufficient ground of aſſurance, that they ſhall be gratified as every other univerſal impreſſion is found to be. For we find that God has not ſubjected any being in his creation, to any juſt wants or deſires, for which he has not made adequate proviſion; and that he has fitted nothing for any peculiar uſe, to which he has not deſigned that it ſhall be applied.—Nay more, it is not only that he has provided gratification for all the deſires of his creatures, but ſuch is the *frugality* of his wiſdom, that he

he has made that very gratification ſubſervient to the moſt admirable and neceſſary ends.

I WILL not detain you with many illuſtrations; they are obvious and almoſt innumerable. If God has ſubjected every animal to the natural appetite of hunger—for every animal has his bounty provided convenient food, and to every animal has he given a power of obtaining that food; and according to the various nature of the food ſuited to his wants, each animal is furniſhed with jaws of the moſt various forms to prepare his food, and with viſcera adapted moſt wonderfully to its digeſtion; and to complete all, God has provided, that whilſt the natural appetite is gratified, life itſelf ſhall be ſuſtained. On every creature, however ferocious or feeble, God has impreſſed the irreſiſtible deſire of love. This deſire is even by a late writer, beautifully imagined to extend to the very vegetable creation.—Hence the fields are enamelled with flowers, the trees ſpread on the mountains, and the gardens are hung with golden fruits.—Hence the woods are vocal with the muſic of birds, the lions roar in the foreſt, the ſerpent burniſhes his ſcales, the fiſhes wanton in the deep.—Hence all nature is inſpired, and hence the gay earth itſelf ſmiles in every feature; whilſt man exerts all his powers to pleaſe.—And from the operation of this powerful cauſe,

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the grand œconomy of eternal wiſdom ſupplies ſucceſſive generations to the whole world.

If for his various creatures God hath benevolently provided a wonderful variety of food, to ſatisfy their appetites, and of accommodations to anſwer their wants; if no deſire is found in all inferior nature, deſtitute of its juſt and ſuitable gratifications, ſhall we heſitate to conclude, that the nobleſt and the ſtrongeſt deſire of his rational creation, cannot be alone exhauſted and diſſipated in a vain and fruitleſs hope. If we hunger, the bounty of our Heavenly Father hath provided various food; not only to ſatisfy our mere neceſſities, as he has provided for inferior animals, but even to gratify our moſt faſtidious inclinations. If we thirſt, we are not, like the inferior animals, confined to the ſimple purity of the clear ſtream; but we may drink of all thoſe liquors that confirm the ſtrength, as well as quench the thirſt; we may indulge in all thoſe generous wines, that miniſter often indeed to exceſs, to the moſt wanton luxury, or the moſt ſhameful intemperance. Yet theſe pampered deſires are low and mean, in compariſon of the ſtrong deſire of life, and the elevated hope of meeting in a bleſſed immortality the great and the good, and thoſe we love who have gone before us. As well might we argue that God had given us appetites, and adapted our frame to their gratification,

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but that they are not intended to be gratified; as to ſuppoſe that the hope of living hereafter, which we cannot avoid indulging, is implanted in us but to be inſulted and diſappointed. It might be ſaid to the hungry —you muſt not hope to eat,—and to the thirſty —it is God's ordinance that you ſhould not drink; your mouth however formed to receive food or refreſhment, your teeth however formed to prepare your food, your palate to taſte, and your ſtomach to digeſt, are all a nugatory apparatus for your falſe appetites;—as well as you might threaten him who hungers and thirſts after the Kingdom of God, that he ſhall never taſte its ineffable joy, that he ſhall never behold it, nor enter therein. Nay, if God could ſo deal with men in this reſpect, the cruelty would be ſo much greater than any mockery of the natural and animal appetites, in proportion as the privation of our eternal hopes is greater than any other diſappointment. What though the ear ſhould never in this life, hear the joyful harmony of the creation, and the muſic of ſweet ſounds?—What though the eye ſhould never in this life, behold the bleſſed light of the Sun, nor the enchanting beauties of God's all glorious works?—Still ample compenſation may hereafter be made, and ſhall be made for all theſe privations—when the celeſtial harmony of the ſpheres of Heaven, ſhall burſt at once upon the raviſhed ear; and

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when the eternal glory of God's Majeſty, intolerable to the eye of fleſh, ſhall be revealed, and break upon the unimpriſoned ſoul in a bleſſed immortality.

I HAVE now argued this great ſubject, not by an appeal to authorities which ſome might be inclined to queſtion; but by an appeal to your own knowledge of yourſelves, and what paſſes in your own breaſts. And God grant that we may be all of one heart and one mind on this great ſubject.

I HAVE turned your attention to the abſurdity and cruelty, which muſt be charged on the moral government of the ever-wiſe and good God, unleſs we admit a future ſtate;—and as they who deny it, reduce man to the claſs of the mere animals, or mere vegetation of the earth, which are ſuppoſed to periſh, and to be re-produced alternately; I have been led to draw the ſtrong lines of diſcrimination between the rational and the brute creation—in the interruption of our intellectual progreſs to which the brutes are not ſubject—in the perpetual improvement of man, and in the accumulation of his knowledge, compared with the ſtationary and unimproveable ſtate of brutes—in our conſciouſneſs, our reſponſibility, our fears—but above all, in our powers of looking forward, in our exertions to live only for the future, and in thoſe earneſt

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and juſt hopes which God's goodneſs cannot diſappoint.

THESE topics of reflection are ſufficient to convince us of our nature, and I truſt if purſued in their juſt conſequences will be a ſource of peace and happineſs, to the ſincere mind—a light glimmering and feeble indeed, in compariſon to the glory of Revelation, but yet not without its humble uſes in this our dark eſtate.

I COULD here dwell with pleaſure and advantage upon the various excellence of this bleſſed hope of future life: its conſolation to the miſeries of affliction, its reſtraint upon the inſolence of proſperity; its powerful influence to promote the virtue, and the happineſs of men; its authority in deterring from ſins and crimes; and above all its efficacy in diſarming death himſelf of his moſt dreadful terrors; but I muſt leave theſe moſt intereſting topics to your own conſideration, or make them the ſubjects of ſome future diſcuſſion.

I HAVE treſpaſſed already too long on your patience, but the vaſt importance of the ſubject muſt plead my excuſe, particularly as it appears to me the duty of every Chriſtian Miniſter and reaſonable man, to combat with his beſt abilities, the dangerous and gloomy opinions which threaten again to involve Europe in the night of Paganiſm.

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THE grandeſt part of my ſubject ſtill remains —the proof of our future exiſtence from the authority of God's *infallible Revelation*. How ſhall I be able now to devote a juſt and due attention to this ſacred enquiry?—To this ſacred authority, the ſupport and ground work of our feeble reaſoning, and of our ſure and bleſſed hopes of eternal life, through our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.

I CANNOT indeed enter now with ſufficient minuteneſs into this great portion of my ſubject. But, wherefore ſhould it be neceſſary more than to appeal to the recollection of a congregation of Chriſtians—your faith ſhall therefore excuſe my deficiency—you are not yet to learn Chriſt.

ONE truth of Revelation I cannot paſs over, I muſt recall it to your recollection—becauſe *reaſon* could not have even hoped for ſuch an extenſion of God's mercy—becauſe *reaſon* could not have conceived the tenderneſs of his benevolence, in providing to the utmoſt, gratification for all, even the remoteſt of our juſt and worthy deſires. We have reaſoned concerning the future exiſtence of the ſoul; but the goſpel of God has not only graciouſly confirmed our hopes and feeble reaſonings, but has promiſed in addition the reſurrection of our bodies, has promiſed that they ſhall be reunited to our ſouls, to partake with them if we labour to deſerve it, a bleſſed immortality. Thoſe bo-

dies, now connected to them by ties ſo dear, thoſe bodies ſo beloved, ſo cheriſhed, ſo indulged, thoſe bodies the objects of our mutual knowledge of each other, of our ſtrongeſt friendſhips, and of our mutual and fervent affections —thoſe bodies, to gratify which we are raſh enough to hazard our immortal ſouls.—Thoſe bodies, ſays the Goſpel of Chriſt, though they moulder and periſh in the grave, are not loſt to us for ever, but having undergone a wonderful regeneration by death, and being changed into celeſtial and immortal, ſhall rejoin their ſouls fit habitations for them to dwell in, free from ſorrow, ſin, or pain to eternity. *They are ſown* (ſays St. Paul) *in corruption, they ſhall be raiſed in incorruption; they are ſown in diſhonour, they ſhall be raiſed in glory; they are ſown in weakneſs, they ſhall be raiſed in power; they are ſown natural, they ſhall be raiſed ſpiritual bodies.*

When theſe our ſpiritual bodies on the laſt day, are ſummoned by the awful trumpet, to join their immortal ſouls—then ſhall follow the great judgment before the Lamb of God, when all ſhall receive the final puniſhments or rewards, due to their conduct in this life of trial. And with the magnificent and ſolemn deſcription of that day, together with our Lord's own inſtructions how to prepare beſt for it, contained in the latter part of the xxv chapter of St. Mathew's goſpel, I will at length conclude this diſcourſe.

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When the Son of Man ſhall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then ſhall he ſit upon the throne of his glory. And before him ſhall be gathered all nations; *and he ſhall ſeperate them one from another, as a ſhepherd divideth his ſheep from the goats: And he ſhall ſet the ſheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then ſhall the king ſay unto them on his* right *hand, come, ye bleſſed of my father inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungred and ye gave me meat: I was thirſty and ye gave me drink: I was a ſtranger and ye took me in: Naked and ye clothed me: I was ſick and ye viſited me: I was in priſon and ye came unto me. Then ſhall the righteous* (aſtoniſhed at the imputation of righteouſneſs beyond their deſert) *anſwer him, ſaying, Lord, when ſaw we* thee *an hungred and fed thee? Or thirſty and gave thee drink? When ſaw we thee a ſtranger and took thee in? or naked and clothed thee? or when ſaw we thee ſick, or in priſon and came unto thee? And the king ſhall anſwer and ſay unto them, verily I ſay unto you, inaſmuch as ye have done it unto one of the leaſt of* theſe *my brethren, ye have done it unto me.—Then ſhall he ſay alſo to them on the left hand, depart from me ye curſed, into everlaſting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was an hungred and ye gave me* no *meat: I was thirſty and ye gave me no drink: I was a ſtranger and ye took me not in: Naked and ye clothed me not: Sick and in priſon*

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and ye viſited me not. Then ſhall they alſo (confounded with imputed ſin, as well as actual guilt) *anſwer him, ſaying, Lord, when ſaw we thee an hungred, or a thirſt, or a ſtranger, or naked, or ſick, or in priſon, and did not miniſter unto thee? Then ſhall he anſwer them ſaying, verily I ſay unto you, inaſmuch as ye did it not to one of the leaſt of theſe, ye did it not unto me. —And theſe ſhall go away into everlaſting puniſhment; but the righteous into* LIFE ETERNAL.

FINIS.